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SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL MARR NATO LH
SUBJECT: LITHUANIAN NON-PAPERS ON POSSIBLE U.S. DEFENSE
SUPPORT TO LITHUANIA

Classified By: CDA W.S. Reid III
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Lithuanian DCM Gediminas Varvulnis called on A/DCM Reid on 14 October to discuss Vilnius' ideas for increased U.S. military investment and cooperation. In addition to raising the Lithuanian MFA's non-paper which had been passed to the United States on the margins of UNGA, he also provided a new Ministry of Defense non-paper on the same issue. Varvulnis did not make detailed comments on the subject matter and acknowledged that Lithuanian defense spending must rise if requests for assistance are to be come more credible. He said his mission is working hard to that end.

¶2. (C) Comment: USNATO assesses that the MOD paper is superior to the MFA paper, but both suffer from the underlying problem of insufficient Lithuanian defense spending, amounting to only 1.15 per cent of their GDP in ¶2008. Among Allies, only Luxembourg, Hungary and Belgium spend a smaller percentage of GDP on defense than Lithuania, and the NATO target for defense spending is two percent. In previous meetings at NATO Lithuanians have stated that they would "like to spend two per cent, but they don't know what to spend it on." We consider the priorities to be addressed in both non-papers a good place for them to start, and provide the text of both documents for Washington's consideration when formulating policy concerning Lithuania and the region. End comment.

¶3. (C) //BEGIN TEXT - MOD Paper//

CONTINUED TRANSFORMATION OF THE U.S. GLOBAL DEFENSE POSTURE:
POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS OF LITHUANIA

U.S. Defense Posture Realignment: Lithuanian View

Since the inception of the U.S. global defence posture realignment, Lithuania has been strongly supportive of this process.

First of all, Lithuania accepts the basic assumptions, guiding the shift in U.S. overseas military presence. In the present strategic environment, characterized by a high degree of unpredictability, the forces are no longer expected to fight where they are based. Instead, military operations are often conducted as a strategic distance, which requires having flexible and agile forces. In this regard, the U.S. defense posture realignment is timely and relevant response to today's strategic reality.

Equally important are the positive practical implications

that the changes in U.S. military posture have on NATO as a whole and on individual allies. This process creates a strong impetus to further advance NATO's transformation. Involved Allies especially the newer members of NATO, get a clear confirmation of their credibility and strategic value. By contributing to the national and Allied security, they also uphold NATO's spirit of collectiveness and solidarity and reinforce transatlantic relations.

Against this background, Lithuania very much welcomes U.S. commitment to continue to transform its global defense posture, which was reiterated in the recently adopted National Defense Strategy. Appreciating the transparency and openness, which are the underlying principles of the U.S. consultations, Lithuania is willing and able to join the growing network of U.S. capabilities and arrangements with Allies and partners and to contribute to the projected American footprint in Europe.

Why Lithuania?

The conflict in Georgia has prompted Lithuania to consider a comprehensive review and reinforcement of national defense measures. In addition to strengthening national defense capabilities, high importance is attached to further development of the host nation support (HNS) capacities. The latter directly corresponds to the aim of securing a tangible presence of infrastructure or personnel of NATO or individual allies on Lithuanian territory.

Lithuania would like to renew its offer to be part of the U.S. rebasing activities. It should be stressed that this

offer is not based on a narrow local interest, but on a broad strategic assessment of security situation in the Northeastern Europe. From a strategic perspective Lithuania is situated in a critical geopolitical location. Being the most eastern EU and NATO member and standing in the crossroads of Western and Northeastern Europe. Lithuania can offer a convenient posture for different defense arrangements. In addition, Lithuania borders countries that do not shy away from rogue and sometimes even aggressive behavior. The risks emerging in the Baltic region may affect the security of the entire Alliance

Practical proposals

In practice the territory of Lithuania could serve several important purposes for the US force posture in Europe. If strategic situation and in particular NATO's relations with Russia continue to deteriorate further, Lithuania would be willing to consider a possible permanent hosting of US forces for the joint use of Lithuanian military facilities. In the meantime, Lithuania, with some assistance from NATO, continues to invest in and upgrade its defense-related infrastructure. In this regard, priority is given to the Zokniai air base, which hosts the Allies fighters performing NATO's air policing mission in the Baltic States. In the future, the implementation of several important projects, aimed at developing HNS infrastructure for strategic airlift and air defense fighter capabilities and providing air-to-air refueling services, is foreseen. Lithuania also has a convenient sea port at Klaipeda, which could be used for the HNS, including reception, transit or stationing of the US naval forces. With some investment and upgrading of existing facilities, the above mentioned infrastructure could be used to assist the "rotational presence," movement or periodic operational presence of U.S. troops.

U.S. and NATO military footprint in Lithuania could be also enhanced through military exercises. Lithuania holds that it is necessary to re-energize the organization of NATO-wide military exercises, more specifically, to train the NATO Response Force for the conduct of Article 5 operations. While raising and discussing this issue at NATO level the US endorsement and support would be indispensable. As for bilateral and multilateral exercises, the U.S. forces could routinely make use of the open land on Lithuanian territory.

There is already some appropriate infrastructure installed and running, including training bases, firing ranges, barracks, state-of-the-art tactical training facilities etc. In addition, Lithuania can offer relatively low operating costs and highly experienced staff, who have managed a number of international exercises. Lithuania also highly appreciates U.S. contribution to the development of a training centre for Special Operations Forces in Lithuania and looks forward to exploring the possibilities to transform this enter into the center of excellence.

In any of the above-mentioned cases, U.S. military presence in Lithuania would not turn into a financial burden for the U.S.) Lithuania will do its utmost to provide necessary infrastructure along with appropriate security and logistics arrangements for any potential US presence (facilities, equipment, or/and troops).

In addition, Lithuania welcomes the agreements between the U.S. and Poland and the Czech Republic on the deployment of the missile defence assets in Europe. Lithuania would be ready to discuss any possible Lithuania,s involvement in support of this important strategic endeavor.

Last, but not least, it is important to emphasize that any direct U.S. military presence in Lithuania would elevate the bilateral partnership to a whole new level, which would be fully consistent with NATO,s principle of collective defense. Collective defense guarantees, as provided in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, form the backbone of security and defense policy of each member of NATO. At the same time, under Article 3, the Allies are supposed to maintain and develop the capabilities on individual or bilateral basis, so as to strengthen their capabilities to resist armed attack. In this light enhanced U.S.-Lithuanian cooperation would provide large security dividends not only for the two partners but for the entire transatlantic alliance.

Lithuania is looking forward to further consultations with American experts on the needs and plans of the U.S. future force posture to be able to further refine the proposals advanced in this non-paper and present them in a more elaborate detail.

//END TEXT - MOD Paper//

¶4. (C) //BEGIN TEXT - MFA Paper//

We ask for U.S. support initiating the review of MC 161 and producing contingency operation plan (COP) for the Baltic Region (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia).

We ask to continue the work undertaken by US EUCOM re: preparations for the Baltic States to host U.S. military units in case crisis and/or military conflict.

Increase U.S. military funding to Lithuania/Baltics, especially investments into capabilities to host U.S. combat support units.

Strengthening elements of NATO collective defense (ACT).

Priority Areas for FMF support and US military advise:

Creating/strengthening anti-aircraft and anti-missile defense capabilities.

Strengthening navy and coastal defense

Strengthening anti-tank capabilities

Military exercises (NATO, multilateral, bilateral)

Annual U.S.-Baltic exercise (above battalion level) in one of the Baltic nations starting 2009

US support in dedicating part of NATO exercises (CMX and other) to Article 5 scenario.

Air Policing:

Permanent Solution is needed

We need U.S. support to continue the mission at least until 2018.

We need U.S. support in looking for a solution after 2011

To maintain the element of NATO presence after 2018 as well as standard of readiness (able to respond/react in 15 min, 24/7)

U.S. support for NATO funded projects in Siauliai airport and Karmelava CRC/ARS (airspace control center)

U.S. footprint/presence in the Baltics:

In Lithuania; joint U.S.-Lithuanian SOF center of excellence

Elements of infrastructure/combat units supporting American installations in Poland.

Supporting Lithuania's participation in international operations:

Support relevant projects in Ghour province (Lithuanian PRT): Chagcharan airport and Kaboul-Chagcharan-Herat highway.

Help in convincing Kaboul to deploy ANA unit in Ghour province

Supplying Lithuanian units in Afghanistan with certain military equipment.

Tapping into the Lithuanian scientific/technical potential:

Supporting Lithuanian scientific community

Involvement Lithuanian research and science into DOD funded projects.

Promoting cooperation between US defence industry and Lithuanian scientific community.

//END TEXT - MFA Paper//
REID